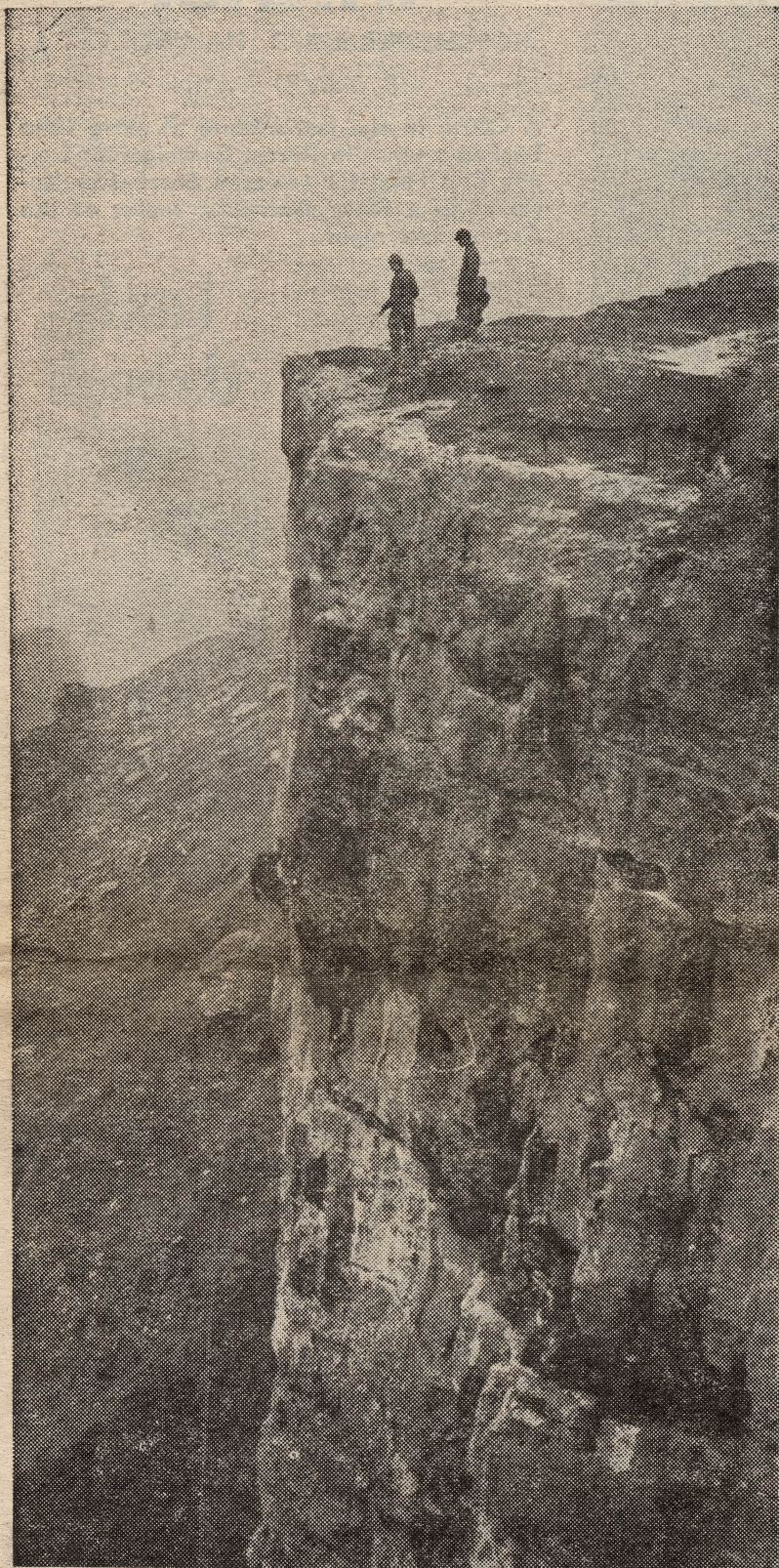


# Cave network found on Portland



*The descent: The way to the cave opening which cannot be seen from above or below.*



David Churcher (18) examines vividly coloured straw stalactites in the roof of the grotto in Query Rift.

**A YOUNG Army cadet swung 30 frightening feet over the edge of a 100ft. cliff at Blacknor, Portland . . . and found the entry to a new underground world.**

He was one of a party of cadets from Hardy's School, Dorchester, who were about to enter a cliffside hole which was to lead to a never-before-discovered network of tunnels stretching back 1,000 feet.

Now, after months of weekly visits to the

**STORY:**

**Jack Fullford**

**PHOTOS:**

**Andrew MacTavish**

tunnels they have drawn detailed maps of the network.

Junctions and rifts are dubbed with names such as Piccadilly, Grand Canyon and Fool's Paradise Tunnel.

It all started when

the Army section of the school's cadet force asked the Navy to take some aerial photographs of the cliffs where they undertook regular climbing and caving expeditions.

The cadets wanted the

pictures for display. What they did not expect was that the photographs would lead them to the discovery of the biggest cave system so far found on the island.

For just 34 feet from the top of the overhanging cliff at Blacknor could be seen a curious black square measuring 3ft. by 3ft.

After arguing about what the square was it was decided to settle the matter—and cadet Ian Wolff swung down and confirmed it was indeed a hole.

Encouraged by this, Capt. Andrew MacTavish, the school's head of English, who runs the cadet force, got together a party of eight experienced cadets.

And, in a howling gale, they made the descent as a team and started the probing of the cave system.

Says Mr. MacTavish: "This cave system is a serious challenge. The seven day-long expeditions so far have been undertaken at weekends and holidays by picked volunteers from the skilled cadets.

## ROPE

"I am always in charge and safety is the first consideration. I am frequently roped by the boys and I depend on them as they do on me.

"There's no place for false heroics in this game. If you're scared you say so openly and no one jeers.

"These youngsters have enormous courage. They are going where no man has ever been before.

"They are disturbing sand ripples last moved before the last ice-age when Portland was part of a much greater land mass."



Nick Adams (16) leads Chris Churchill (16) down Ariel Tunnel from the entrance to Piccadilly. At one point the roof is only sixteen inches high.